

NY Times 15 Apr 68
Joint Committee on
Atomic Energy

Rickover Is Winning Fight For a Swifter Submarine

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 13 — This year, as he has often done in the past, the admiral has bypassed the Defense Department and gone to Congress with his case. In an arrangement that leaves his Congressional supporters chuckling with admiration, he has worked out a plan providing that if the Defense Department will not start construction of the submarine, then the Atomic Energy Commission will, under Congressional edict.

Thus, the admiral prevailed upon the Senate Armed Services Committee to add \$33.9 million to the military authorization bill for development of nuclear reactors and a hull for a new type of nuclear attack submarine.

To his increasing annoyance, he has been blocked by repeated Defense Department requests for more "cost effectiveness" studies on the need for such a submarine.

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submarine. The expectation is that a similar amount will be added by the House Armed Services Committee when the bill reaches the House.

But as insurance, the admiral prevailed upon the Congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, with the acquiescence of the Atomic Energy Commission, to include an extra \$8-million in the atomic authorization bill recently passed by Congress.

The \$8-million is the amount needed by Admiral Rickover's Division of Navy Nuclear Propulsion to start work on the reactor for the proposed submarine.

The understanding between the joint committee and the commission is that if the Defense Department refuses to spend the money in the military authorization bill, then the A.E.C. will permit Admiral Rickover, who is both a Navy and A.E.C. official, to proceed on the project with its money.

There is a precedent for such a political arrangement dating back to the construction of the first two atomic submarines—the Nautilus and the Seawolf—some 15 years ago. At that time, the Defense Department was interested in the nuclear submarine project, so the joint committee arranged for the A.E.C. to buy the propulsion plants for the first two nuclear submarines.

The attitude of the Defense Department was changed by the success of the Nautilus (the Seawolf, with her different type of reactor, proved to be a technical failure). Since then the Defense Department has willingly gone along with the construction of 41 Polaris submarines and 69 nuclear attack submarines.

Need for Subs Questioned

But now, on the basis of its "cost effectiveness" studies, the Defense Department is questioning the need to build additional attack submarines, which are used primarily for protection against enemy submarines. This prompted the admiral to complain recently in testimony before the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy:

"The Defense Department appears to be too much concerned with the procedural methods rather than the real issue. Today it would be impossible to get the Department of Defense to authorize the Nautilus."

The "real issue," as Admiral Rickover sees it, is the need to develop better nuclear submarines and build more of them to counter the expanding and improving Soviet nuclear submarine fleet. It was with this argument that he persuaded Congress to go along with his plan to develop an improved nuclear submarine class.

From various pieces of heavily censored Rickover testimony, reportedly backed up by testimony from the Central Intelligence Agency, it appears that the Soviet Union is making rapid technological progress in developing and building atomic submarines.

A few years ago, Admiral

Rickover consistently boasted of the technological leadership of the United States in nuclear submarines. But now he is warning that the Soviet Union has overcome its earlier technological problems and is building the submarines at an increasing rate.

Says We'll Lose Lead

As a result, he is now warning that unless there is a reversal of Defense Department policy, the Soviet Union will "surpass us in their nuclear submarines within five years."

Just what characteristics Admiral Rickover wants to build into his new class of nuclear attack submarines is being kept secret. But it appears that the primary objective is to increase the speed of the new submarines so they can keep pace with the Soviet submarines.

This in turn, will require the development of a much more powerful atomic reactor, yet compact enough to fit into the present hulls of nuclear attack submarines.

The present nuclear submarines are believed to be capable of speeds of at least 23 knots submerged. With the water resistance at such speeds, it requires a doubling of power just to increase the speed by a few knots.

With Congressional insistence, Admiral Rickover, meanwhile has won another struggle with the Defense Department over construction of nuclear powered surface ships. President Johnson recently announced that he had ordered the construction of two nuclear powered guided-missile frigates that Congress had authorized but which the Defense Department has refused to build.

With some assistance from the admiral, Congress forced the issue by ordering the Defense Department to build the frigates unless the President determined their construction was not in the national interest.

Somewhat the same constitutional issue is now being raised by Congress in the move to force the Defense Department to construct a new class of nuclear submarines.

The Rickover argument that is being willingly accepted on Capitol Hill is that in imposing its will on the Defense Department, the Congress is simply asserting its constitutional prerogatives to "provide and maintain a navy."